



ZERO BEAT

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Summits-on-the-air activation report

By Matt Zimbelman / KFORIG

On January 15, Steve/WG0AT, Ray/KD8EQA, and Matt/KFORIG successfully activated Capulin Volcano in northern New Mexico as a Summits-On-The-Air (SOTA) peak. The mountain, located in the stunning Raton-Clayton volcanic field with its dramatic cinder cones and ancient lava flows, offered breathtaking views. It would be an excellent SOTA peak for any operators looking to get started in the SOTA program.

Running 100 watts on an FT-891 with an end-fed halfwave antenna cut to 40m, the team logged 29 SSB contacts on multiple bands despite challenging propagation conditions. A highlight of the activation was a remarkable voice (SSB) QSO with EA8VD located in the Canary Islands, Spain (approximately 5000 miles away).





Summits-on-the-air activation report cont.

After Steve activated the mountain on CW with his trusty K1I sporting an AX1 whip, he humbly switched to Silly Sideband, proving not only that he has a voice, but he's also more than capable of using it, much to the surprise of many well-known CW SOTA chasers!

You can see video of the activation at this link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJX-Xw4nXX8>
You may also click or scan QR code to be redirected to YouTube.



Kicking off a new year of on-air events at Winter Field Day 2025



Winter field day is a good way to start each new year by providing opportunities to get on the air, but the PPRAA setup crew felt especially welcomed with temperatures in the mid-fifties at Cheyenne Mountain State Park on the Friday afternoon before field day, January 24. With clear skies and plenty of helping hands, the masts went up quickly, feedlines were run, and before long there were two complete stations, powered and ready for action. The first was a phone station provided by Ken/K0KWH, featuring a Yaesu FT-DX10 transceiver and a delta loop antenna. The second was a digital station provided by LD/W0XLD with an Icom IC-7100, a Raspberry Pi 5 computer handling both digital-mode communications and networked logging, a G5RV antenna, and a Hustler trapped vertical. Station tests resulted in contacts with Europe and South America, so confidence in station setup was high.



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On Saturday, "field day" began at 0900 hours, as new rules extended the event's duration to 30 hours: three before last year's start time, and three after last year's end time. Also starting around the same time as field day was a fairly typical January snow storm. Several inches fell throughout the day, so the participants took advantage of the well-heated campers. The antennas withstood the snow storm without incident.

One new feature this year was switching away from Cloudlog for logging, and using Nextcloud instead. With a general-purpose table-editing app, its data-entry webpage allows quick input of the needed field day exchange, but it lacks amateur-radio-specific functions like automatic checking of class or section. However, Nextcloud provides completely off-grid web service with no internet connection needed, and it doesn't require much server hardware to allow a few stations to log simultaneously and to use text chat between the campers. The Raspberry Pi computer used to host the Nextcloud web service and to make JS8Call contacts was powered entirely off of 13.8 volts DC, meaning the same power systems used for the radios and tuners—batteries, solar panels, etc.—can be used for all aspects of digital operation and logging as well.

Winter Field Day cont.

An interesting lesson learned from this on-site network was that typical 2.4 GHz WiFi may not work very well when connecting campers in a snowstorm: the resonant frequency of water molecules is near the frequency used by the network, so when a lot of snow is in the air in between campers, attenuation can become so great that the computers can no longer talk to each other! Fortunately, switching to 5 GHz WiFi seemed to fix that problem, but with a few networking hobbyists on site, there was an even better solution at hand. Ben/AB2SG brought two fiber transceivers and plenty of multi-mode fiber cable to connect the two campers. The transceivers also ran on 13.8 volts DC, so we maintained our ability to operate completely on field power.



Winter Field Day 2025 cont.



In the 30 hours of on-air activity, PPRAA made 911 contacts. These included 47 states (missing South Dakota, Vermont, and Hawaii), Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, eight out of ten provinces of Canada (missing Manitoba and Newfoundland but we finally worked Prince Edward Island for once!), Northwest Territories, and DX stations participating in field day from Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, and Mexico.

Turnout was lower than previous years due to the severe weather and risky travel conditions, but nonetheless all visitors and participants enjoyed some good conversation, good company, and good food. Everyone who helped with setup, operations, snow clearing, snacks, mentorship, and tear-down was greatly appreciated. Even those who could not attend but who got into the log through VHF or JS8Call contacts was a benefit to this event. Thanks to you all, and here's hoping your 2025 is filled with more such rewarding on-air activities!

On the Air with PPRAA February 2025:

Who: All amateur operators of license class General and above

What: JS8Call net

When: Friday, Feb. 21, 2000 (8:00 PM) MST

Where: Your ham shack! Meet on 28.078 MHz
(Default 10-meter JS8Call frequency)

How: Add "@PPRAA" to your callsign group in
the JS8Call program's settings

Unsure how to use JS8Call software?

Join us for the PPRAA monthly membership meeting
on Wednesday, February 12,
for a presentation on how to get started with weak-signal
digital modes, and use JS8Call for nets,
field days, and emergency communications.

FREE Radio Licensing Test Sessions
Second Saturday of every month at 10 am
Pikes Peak Regional
Office of Emergency Management
3755 Mark Dabbling Blvd.
Colorado Springs, CO 80907
ve@ppraa.org

FEBRUARY

General Membership meeting (12 FEB 2025) will be both in-person and virtual

Location: Golden Corral
1970 Waynoka Rd, Colorado Springs

The business meeting starts at 7 PM, but get your dinner and beverage of choice and check in any time after 6 PM for a social hour. Club members check your email for info or email Officers@PPRAA.org to receive the Zoom information.

Friday, February 21, 2025

PPRAA JS8 Call Event

Watch PPRAA.org for more information

Contact Zero Beat

Do you have photos of PPRAA events you'd like to share, or news from the ham radio world that the club might like to hear? Please email zerobeat@ppraa.org to share your ideas and pictures.